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ABSIRACT

OUR MAIN DIFFICULTY IN BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP AND ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH YOUTH IS OUR FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE ACCELERATED PACE OF CHANGE HAS RESULTED IN YOUNG PEOPLE BEING MEMBERS OF A CULTURE SUBSTANTIALLY DIFFERENT FROM OUR OWN. THE EFFECTIVE MEANS FOR THE TOTAL CONTROL OF THE ENVIRONMENT IS NOW AVAILABLE. THE GENERATION GAP IS DUE TO THIS SUCCESS. HOWEVER, WHILE TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT IS GREATLY ADVANCED, MORAL DEVELOPMENT IS RETARDED. A GUILT HAS DEVELOPED IN THE YOUNGER GENERATION BECAUSE THEY FEEL MORALLY COMPELLED TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL JUSTICE. YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE NOT DEVELOPED AND CANNOT DEVELOP EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS FOR OUR SOCIAL PROBLEMS. BUT THEY ARE POETICAL, AND THEY DO HAVE SHARP INSIGHT INTO CERTAIN TRUTHS WHICH MOST OF US CANNOT OR WILL NOT SEE. THE YOUNG UNDERSTAND THE OLDER GENERATION AND TUNE THEM OUT AND REJECT THEM AS BEING OUT-OF-TUNE WITH REALITY. THE WAY TO COMMUNICATE WITH THE YOUNG IS TO STAY YOUNG AND ALIVE, TO BE LOVING, AND TO BE WILLING TO LET THE YOUNG SHARE IN A MORE VIGOROUS LEADERSHIP AND DRIVE TOWARDS ACHIEVING MORE HUMANE AND MUTUALLY RESPECTFUL HUMAN RELATIONS AND MORE EFFECTIVE SOCIAL JUSTICE. (KJ)

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COMMUNICATING WITH YOUTH

BY

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AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
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Our main difficulty in bridging the generation gap and establishing and maintaining effective communication with youth is our failure to recognize that the accelerated pace of change has resulted in young people being members of a culture substantially different from our own.

The pace of change in the 20th Century is totally without precedent in human history. In the fields of science and technology, there was more progress between 1900 and 1950 than in the whole previous history of the human race. Between 1950 and 1965, there was more progress than in the first 50 years. It has been estimated that two-thirds of all the trained scientists that ever lived are alive today and working hard on discovering new techniques for even further changes. We now estimate that the half-life of professional and scientific knowledge is no greater than seven years, and is probably decreasing rapidly towards five years.

In other words, we now have available to us effective means for the total control of our environment. My generation has not yet fully realized that it is within the power of our society -- and therefore, it is the responsibility of our society -- to remake our world so that the social justice that we have long preached, can at last be practiced.

Not only do we have the power of knowledge, but we also have the power of money. The United States is the first major post-industrial society. This means that the greater part of our Gross

National Product increasingly comes from the higher intellectual and professional services rather than from the physical production of goods. Our national economy seemingly is set on an inevitable growth that will yield an ever increasing amount of "disposable income" to the federal government for which there are now no commitments in existing or authorized programs. Responsible conservative economists estimate that by 1975, the federal government will have an additional $75 billion available for new programs for achieving social justice beyond those now in existence and authorized. Thereafter, there will be an annual increase of this discretionary income in the magnitude of $12 to $20 billion.

The older generations have been programmed in their culture and personal attitudes by the scarring memories of such events as major depressions and by our historical struggles to achieve some stability and security in the production and possession of national and personal wealth. The generation gap is due to our success. We have succeeded to the point where the younger generation is, and ought to be, free from our "hang-ups." They should not worry about making money. They should worry about the inevitable difficulties and resistences in readjusting our programs for the solution of our national and social problems, so that we may successfully and effectively restructure and expand our patterns of organization and exercise of governmental powers for the achievement of something like <u>full</u> social justice <u>now</u>.

While we have accelerated our progress in scientific and technological knowledge and economic development, in contrast we have been greatly retarded in moral development. Our old moral principles are fine, and paradoxically, we have succeeded in passing these principles as moral imperatives on to the young generation. Where we, the older generations, are retarded, is in our failure to adjust to our new capabilities in discovering and implementing newer techniques for a more effective application of our new power in the implementation of our old moral principles.

We have succeeded so well that many of the brightest of the younger generation share a sense of guilt that is peculiar to our times. They look about and they fully understand that they have not earned the high standard of living and comfort that is available to over 80% of the American population. They also understand that the 10% to 20% outside the beneficient influence of the growth of our economy have really committed no sins or crimes to earn their deprivation. This sense of guilt is colored by the spirit of Nuremberg. They cannot in conscience excuse themselves from being a passive part of a really arbitrary or irresponsible social order merely because they did not order it directly or bring it about through their own free choosing. Their guilt results in their feeling morally compelled to achieve social justice.

In a sense, therefore, we in the older generation are culturally deprived. Our personal values are deeply rooted in our religious traditions, but our practices have been programmed largely by our early experiences in adjusting to the difficulties of achieving social and economic security and stability in what appeared to be a hostile and unstable world. Our children are growing up in a different culture.

Our children are different than us. Physically they are healthier and they mature earlier. This early maturity is not restricted to earlier monthly blood flows and growth of beards. It manifests itself in a earlier concern with the external world and the responsibility of young people for reshaping this external world.

Mentally, the young know more than we did at their age and frequently know more than we do at our age. They are sharper in their thinking and they think differently. Today, in a good college, we teach much of what formerly was taught in graduate school. In a good high school, much of what we teach was formerly taught in college. How many adults can really understand the "new math"? The young are not necessarily wiser, but they are different.

We have exposed our young to massive amounts of television from infancy. The net effect of the television is mind expansion, resulting from a greater extensity, frequency and intensity of stimuli

than the occasional reading of fairy tales from kind aunts and uncles which shaped the older generation. They have been continuously exposed to highly professional communication and stimuli. Accelerated growth and maturity to some extent is their response to this additional stimuli.

As an illustration of their comparatively earlier maturity and concern for the broader society, study the substansive content of the records they buy and the records that are played on their radio stations. Whether it is Donovan or Dylan, the Beatles, Elvis Presley and "The Ghetto" or "Games People Play," they are and they have been paying closer and more intensive attention to the more fundamental and urgent problems of our contemporary world than their elders. They have been faster to perceive the importance of some of those problems even though as yet, they have not satisfied their elders that they have the fully developed solutions for these problems.

Young people -- and remember these recordings of social concern are bought and studied by the Junior High School students -- young people are not philosophers or statesmen. They have not developed and cannot develop effective solutions for our social problems. But they are poetical, and they do have sharp insight into certain truths which most of us cannot or will not see. Young

people are moral enthusiasts in insisting on more vigorous application of our common moral principles in striving for more immediate solutions to our more urgent social problems.

They are emotionally confused. This has always been characteristic to some extent of adolescence and post-adolescence. Interesting enough, however, when they strive to use drugs to cope with their emotional problems and confusions, they overwhelmingly use the mind expanding types of drugs.

In contrast, their elders turn towards sedatives (Seconal, Doriden, Phenobarbital) and tranquilizers (Miltown, Equanil, Librium). Adults take drugs in part for their sedative and tranquilizer effects -- even such common drugs as Asprin, Bufferin, Cope and Compoz and antihistemines taken for sinus and colds. And the abuse of alcohol is more a characteristic of the older rather than the younger generation.

Amongst the older generation, 25% take psychotropes (women 31% and men 15%) and as income increases over $10,000, the use of psychotropes by adults to effectively cope more with the complexities of change increases among men from 15% to 22% and from women 26% to 42%.

I cite these figures for indicative rather than for definitive purposes. They indicate the alienation, frustration and discontent with contemporary living are a widespread characteristic of our

time, not of one generation. But, in part, the generation gap is the different way in which we face the challenge of this discontent. Young people strive to find ways of changing the world while older people are trying to find ways of escaping responsibility for the world through the use of alcohol, sedatives and tranquilizers.

The young understand us, and tune us out and reject us as being out-of-tune with reality. Our culture clings to the past and steadfastly shows great reluctance to use our new powers to meet our thereby expanded responsibilities. Youth may tune us out, but they have heard our cries. Remember the words of the Lennon-McCartney song "Yesterday, All my troubles seem so far away. . . and I believe in yesterday." We do not recognize the pace of change, and change frightens us so that our search tends to be for the tranquility of the simpler days of yesterday. Change excites the young and stimulates the young to new determination to challenge and control the change so that it serves a constructive and, therefore, a social reconstructive purpose.

As an illustration of their understanding of the generation gap, first read the lyrics <u>carefully</u>, and then listen <u>attentively</u> to "She's Leaving Home," a selection from the Beatle's"Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band" album. (See Appendix) As an example of their understanding of our mutual need for love and affection, read

the lyrics carefully and then listen attentively to "I Get By With A Little Help From My Friends" in the same Beatle's album. (See Appendix) I suggest that the "help" they need is the help of friendship. The word for friendship in Latin is the word for love. They need our love. Let them find our love in sufficient quantity so that they need not turn to drugs as an inhuman substitute for our love.

Older people do not understand younger people because we make the mistake of thinking that they are as we were at their age, and that they should try to be as we are at our age, and that someday they will be as we are at our age. They are not and I hope to God they will not be as we are. If we love our children, we want them to be better than we are. They cannot be better unless they are different. We must not command them to be like us, but lovingly counsel them and join with them in the constant search for better ways to apply our moral principles and expanded powers in securing social justice -- and better and more humane human relationships.

To communicate more effective with the young, we should recognize that they are a product of a different culture than our own -- a culture in which the only two stable elements appear to be our basic religious principles and the constancy of new opportunities for newer ways of applying them.

We must learn to listen to them attentively as if they were foreigners -- members of a different culture than our own. We must not be mislead by the fact that they are of our blood, live in our houses, and apparently understand and occasionally use our language. Much of what is in their culture is nonsense, as much of our culture is nonsense, and nearly all of it is derivative. But the composition of their culture <u>is</u> different.

For example, they have a different attitude towards authority. In their formative years, television has shown them that our national leaders are neither Gods or supermen. Two have been shot before their eyes. War has been displayed almost every evening on colored television, and clearly war for them can never be a matter of romance or blind, unthinking patriotism. They have also seen poverty and race discrimination on television and all about them, in ways that we have not seen.

Parents and teachers drink and drive. Many of us smoke tobacco even though we know it is dangerous to our health, and it probably can more easily be proven that tobacco addiction is far more dangerous to our health than occasional use of marijuana. We take our own drugs in the form of Asprin, Bufferin, Compoze, Cope, and of course, alcohol and tobacco. We overeat and the most popular group in the United States is the Weight Watchers Club. We are so

"hung-up" on sex that our generation is that of "Mrs. Robinson" in "The Graduate," and our social life is that portrayed in "Couples", "Portnoy's Complaint," and now "The Love Machine." The Kinsey report was about our generation, not theirs. We, not them, are hung up on sex. For example, it is the older generation that purchases pornography and the younger generation that laughs at Playboy and nudity in modern films.

Young people are impatient with rhetoric, repetition and arguments based on authority. In elementary logic we are taught -- and we have taught them -- that the argument for authority is fallacious when the authority is human. And we are all too visibly human.

As we get older, we are no longer the prime source or thrust for innovation.

We are old when we are the obstacle to change and innovation.

We are old when we refuse to recognize that the constant expansion of our powers brings with it an expansion of our responsibilities and of our obligations to be more effective in achieving in practice the social justice we have always preached.

We can stay mentally alive or young only as we are receptive to and hospitable towards change.

We are senile when we are comfortable only in past patterns.

We are sick if we strive to prevent the young from facing their responsibilities with greater enthusiasm and commitment than we are prone to bring to bear on social problems.

The way to improve communication with the young is for us to stay young and alive, to be loving, and to be willing to let them share in a more vigorous leadership and drive towards achieving more humane and mutually respectful human relations and more effective social justice.

November 10, 1969

Lyrics from The Beatle's

Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band

Album

She's Leaving Home

"Wednesday morning at five o'clock as
the day begins
Silently closing her bedroom door
Leaving the note that she hoped would
say more
She goes downstairs to the kitchen
clutching her handkerchief
Quietly turning the backdoor key
Stepping outside she is free.
She (We gave her most of our lives)
is leaving (Sacrificed most of our lives)
home (We gave her everything
money could buy)
She's leaving home after living alone
For so many years. Bye, bye
Father snores as his wife gets into her
dressing gown
Picks up the letter that's lying there
Standing alone at the top of the stairs
She breaks down and cries to her husband
Daddy our baby's gone.
Why would she treat us so thoughtlessly
How could she do this to me.
She (We never though of ourselves)
is leaving (Never a thought for ourselves)
home (We struggled hard all
our lives to get by)
She's leaving home after living alone
For so many years. Bye, Bye
Friday morning at nine o'clock she is far
away
Waiting to keep the appointment she
made
Meeting a man from the motor trade.
She What did we do that was wrong
is having We didn't know it was wrong
fun Fun is the one thing that
money can't buy
Something inside that was always denied
For so many years. Bye, Bye
She's leaving home bye bye"

Lyrics from The Beatle's

Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band

Album

A Little Help From My Friends

A little help from my friends
What would you think if I sang out of tune,
Would you stand up and walk out on me.
Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song,
And I'll try not to sing out of key.
I get by with a little help from my friends,
I get high with a little help from my friends,
Going to try with a little help from my friends.
What do I do when my love is away.
(Does it worry you to be alone)
How do I feel by the end of the day
(Are you sad because you're on your own)
No I get by with a little help from my friends,
Do you need anybody,
I need somebody to love.
Could it be anybody
I want somebody to love.
Would you believe in a love at first sight,
Yes I'm certain that it happens all the time.
What do you see when you turn out the light,
I can't tell you, but I know it's mine.
Oh I get by with a little help from my friends,
Do you need anybody,
I just need somebody to love,
Could it be anybody.
I want somebody to love.
I get by with a little help from my friends,
Yes I get by with a little help from my friends,
With a little help from my friends.